

Halo Jarhead Chapter 4

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Summary: Now on Reach Lieutenant Sykes finds himself in a dark room being debriefed in such a way to where he feels like he is in an interrogation room.

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Chapter 4:

The Olympia dropped out of Slipspace a safe distance away from Reach. The planet had served as a primary military staging point ever since the war had started, and that was obvious given the ships in orbit and the orbital MAC Guns, which protected the planet. The planet was Earth-like, as all planets that were occupied by UNSC were, since they had all been terraformed to suit the needs that UNSC had for them. Harvest was an agricultural planet, Madrigal a residential and trade planet, Oasis a Resort and tourism planet, while Reach started as a mining planet. ONI, of course, had their secretive hands in every planet with their secret operations and facilities (the one in Cortez was probably just one of many that was on the planet). Such things often made Sykes wonder if it all wasn't a front for the ONI agenda.

The lights winked on in the Cryo-Bay, as Pandora started the defrosting process. Thirty minutes later Lieutenant Sykes rolled off of his, now opened, Cryo-Tube and fell to the floor coughing till a slimy ooze flew from his mouth. "That stuff never tastes any better, yuck."

"It's not designed for taste; it's designed for sustenance during cryogenic hibernation. It provides you with whatever your body requires while it is inactive." Pandora said very informatively.

"Well you need to try a new recipe; anything that you eat and have to puke back up isn't cooked right."

"Then why do you humans consume Alcohol?" Pandora said as her holo-projection raised an eyebrow and crossed her arms.

"TouchÃ©, But we get a desired result for the pain of regurgitation." The Lieutenant said as he stood up and began to put on his uniform, which was sitting right next to his cryo-tube.

"And the same can be said here Lieutenant, because without the 'OOZE' as you call it, you wouldn't wake up from Cryo-sleep."

"Okay, Okay. You win. So are we at Reach?" The Lieutenant said changing the subject so as to keep the AI from getting the upper hand on him with more knowledge of cryogenics.

"Yes Lieutenant. We arrived thirty-three minutes ago and the Admiral is requesting your presence in Pelican 3."

Sykes leaned over and began lacing up his boots and quickly checked his pockets and found the small piece of metal that contained Geterix, his main evidence against the ethics of Rear Admiral Weatherbee's during the operation on Oasis. The Lieutenant secured the disc in his pocket and stood up while putting on his underarm holster and checking his pistol to make sure it was loaded. He wasn't sure how the Admiral would react now that he had some time to think about the implications that he was going to make. He hoped that the Admiral would just allow it and deal with the consequences, but what he had known of the Admiral prior to the mission told him it wouldn't be that simple. Sykes looked at all the other Cryo-tubes in the bay and set his eyes on the one that said MARCO on the front. The gunny had undoubtedly lost it down on Oasis and he had crossed the line when he tried to kill the Admiral, but Sykes realized that in the Gunnies position he probably would have done the same thing. "When will everyone else be awake?" Sykes asked concerned about his marines.

"The next one to awaken will be Master Sergeant Billing in approximately seven and a third minutes. You were woken up first because you have a very important meeting on Reach."

"What kind of meeting?" Sykes asked concerned for his own safety.

"You have an ONI debriefing to attend. Then you have a meeting with a Lieutenant Colonel Sable so as to raise your formal charges against the Rear Admiral."

Sykes was surprised that the AI knew so much and that she had taken the liberty of making an appointment with an ONI official so he might present the formal charges he had against the Admiral. "So I see you were quite busy in the past thirty minutes."

"I wasn't the one who set that up for you Lieutenant, the Rear Admiral was."

This was even more shocking than if Pandora had done it. If she would have made the appointment, it would have made a bit more sense since she was the one that he dictated his report to, even the portion that dealt with the questioning of the Admirals ethics and strategic know-how. But the Rear Admiral, it was almost as though he was

welcoming a court marshal. Or was possible that he just felt responsible for all those who were lost during the mission? "Very good Pandora. When Billings wakes up inform him he is in-charge until I meet up with him on the planet."

"Very well Lieutenant."

The Rear admiral sat across from the Second Lieutenant as the pelican roared through the atmosphere at high speed. The Admiral had been very courteous to the Lieutenant either out of respect for the charges that he was bringing up or out of thanks for the Lieutenant foiling the assassination attempt. The specifics weren't important but Sykes was beginning to get a new impression of the Admiral, and he was starting to regret the charges he was going to file. "Sir, why did you set up my meeting with the Lieutenant Colonel?" Sykes asked after several minutes of wondering but being too afraid to say anything.

"Well Lieutenant, I can see where you are coming from. Given the fact that you saw an error in how I conducted that operation, and that you feel that I should be held accountable for the loss of life that may have been unnecessary. That being said the ethics which I wish to use dictate that I should help you find the truth and justice even if it means I'm stripped of rank."

Sykes was shocked by the answer but didn't show it as he thought about what he would ask next.

"Did you ever hear how it was that I received the rank of Rear Admiral, Lieutenant?" The Admiral asked beating Sykes to the punch.

"No Sir." Sykes answered very interested in the answer that would follow.

"I was a Captain at the time and I was given strategic command over an op on New Havana. I sent a whole company of ODST's to crush an insurrectionist uprising in the capital. Little did I know that they were outnumbered seven to one, which in that type of fight it was hard to tell as everyone was human Allies, Enemies, and by standers. When they informed me that they were being overrun, I sent pelicans to assist and evacuate the men. All three of my Pelicans were shot out of the sky. So I had the city leveled with Long Sword Bombers."

Sykes looked at his commander with surprise and shock to think that the destruction of a city would earn a man the seat of Admiral.

"They felt that I had what it takes to measure the value of life and what would save more of them in the long run. So that's how I got to where I am today. I think your view may bring some peace to all the souls whose blood is on my hands, and I hope it does."

The two men remained quiet the rest of the trip as the ship landed. What Sykes knew now made him question not only Weatherbee but the whole Admiralty.

Lt. Sykes sat in a single chair in the middle of a large dark room as a light fell down upon him. The light was the device used to both

display the man to the board and to keep their identities secret from him during the questioning. But there he sat in his new dress uniform with the new insignia of a Second Lieutenant on his shoulders, already his rank was becoming heavier on his shoulders than he would have liked. The questions were about to begin and he could only imagine what they would deal with.

"Knight Company was sent into combat with exactly three hundred marines. Lieutenant, what happened to cause that number to drop all the way down to the one hundred and sixty three who survived?" A very clear Euro accented voice asked him.

"Well Sirs. This is debatable and I find it difficult, personally, to assign blame to the entry points. However, if I had to guess the majority died within the hour of ending up groundside, and I would have to blame that on poor scouting and measurement of enemy numbers." The Lieutenant said defending himself from the, beginning, onslaught of questions.

"That answers for the majority of the dead, Lieutenant, but what about the others?" A different voice asked him. This voice was different. This was a Western Drawl mostly common to the former southern United States. It was strange because the last time Sykes had heard it was when he was a kid, watching a western vid.

"The rest of the casualties I take full responsibility for, Sirs. I was in command of the operation at the time that they died." Sykes said as his mind immediately went to Marco, and how he had taken the death of many of the marines so hard.

"You were a Master Gunnery Sergeant at the beginning of the operation, Lieutenant. What happened to cause this to occur?" A woman's voice said. Her accent was plain and without definition probably a descendent from North America.

"After the death of Second Lieutenant Pierson, I took command of the third platoon. I was then informed an hour later by Staff Sergeant Rhodes that the second platoon had been cut in half and that the First Lieutenant and the Master Sergeant from that platoon had been KIA, so I merged his platoon and mine and we proceeded to a Com Relay which we thought might give us an uplink to the Olympia. When we reached the uplink we saw the remains of the First Platoon outside the main entrance about to be executed. I gave the order for us to prepare to save the men that included Captain Yollest and Master Gunnery Sergeant Marco. During the course of getting into position the enemy began to shoot the prisoners one by one, starting with the Captain. I ordered an immediate attack and I managed to save all but the Captain. After we took the relay we connected to Olympia through the private satellites that had been powered down. Then, Rear Admiral Weatherbee gave me a field commission in order to complete the mission." As Sykes said this, the reality of all the men he had watched die flashed in-front of him and it all became overwhelmingly real.

"And what exactly do you know of the specifics of the project, which you were sent to secure as the main objective of your mission?" Another woman's voice asked. Hers was different somehow not by the accent but the way she spoke made the Lieutenant think he was speaking to a civilian. But who, he wondered, would be on the evaluation council who wouldn't be military?

"All I know is that it is called Project Light Shield, and that it's a part of the MJOLNIR V Project. However after seeing firsthand the result of the project, I can assume that it is some sort of force shield technology." The Lieutenant was getting nervous due to the fact that he wasn't even supposed to have seen the actual result of the project much less extract the prototypes.

"And that brings me to our next question. Lieutenant, why did you extract the prototypes along with the two doctors?" The European voice asked very smugly.

"Sir when I informed Doctor Lang of my mission, and how I was to personally destroy the prototypes, he protested and informed me of another plan. He had apparently fixed high explosives to the suits, and in the event that someone wearing it would fall, the suit would self-destruct leaving nothing for the Covenant to find. Given that information I found it to be an acceptable risk, especially because it would increase the probability of getting the two doctors out alive."

"You also used some experimental technology, did you not, Lieutenant?" The plain woman's voice asked.

"Yes Ma'am I did. I was given a High-Powered experimental laser weapon in order to destroy the wraith tank that was assaulting my sniper squad."

"And what was your opinion of this weapon Lieutenant?" The civilian asked.

"I believe that it packs one hell of a punch Ma'am, and from the reaction of the Covenant I don't believe they have anything that can rival it."

"Now let's talk about something you encountered on the planet. What is this blur?" The Southerner asked as an image appeared in-front of him.

Sykes knew this image as he had encountered it twice and been lucky enough to escape it both times. "Sir's, that is what we in the marines have named _'The Covenant Ghost'_ and from my experience with it, I can say with honesty that I am more worried about these things than any other enemy we have come across so far on the ground."

"What are its capabilities?" The civilian asked.

"Well Ma'am, from my analysis on both occasions, I have determined that they possess both shielding technology, similar to that of Project Light Shield, and also cloaking technology. Not to mention, what I can assume is, its natural speed and strength."

"How did you defeat this enemy Lieutenant?" The civilian asked again obviously fascinated by the enemy that he had managed to kill not just once but twice.

"Well Ma'am, the first time it almost broke my neck. However, I managed to stick my knife into it and turned it enough to where it opened its mouth, and I then primed a grenade, and force fed it to

the ghost." As Sykes said this he heard a slight chuckle coming from the group, a chuckle that seemed to be primarily male.

"And the second one?" The civilian asked persistently.

"The second one, I deflected its strike with a Jackal Shield. Then, I used an energy blade and put it through its neck."

"And by your analysis this energy blade is the ghosts' main weapon?" The civilian asked now dominating the conversation.

"Yes Ma'am. It was the only common item between the two enemies that I could tell."

"And I'm curious Lieutenant, what did its strike do to the Jackal Shield?"

"It nearly obliterated it Ma'am; with only two strikes."

"Very good, Lieutenant, you did a remarkable job on the ground as the commander of Knight Company. Now I must ask you about the attempt on Admiral Weatherbee's life by Master Gunnery Sergeant Marco." The southerner said.

"Well sir, the Master Gunnery Sergeant felt that the Admiral was personally responsible for the death of nearly half of the company, and that being said he felt it was his duty to avenge their deaths."

"Do you agree with the Master Gunnery Sergeants evaluation Lieutenant?" The European asked.

"To an extent Sir, however I cannot say I would have done the same thing."

"Given the fact that you know more than the Gunny does, right Lieutenant?" The plain woman said.

"Yes Ma'am."

"Very well Lieutenant, those are all the questions we have for you. You are to meet with Lieutenant Colonel Sable to discuss the charges against Rear Admiral Weatherbee and also to discuss your future in the corp. Second Lieutenant, you are dismissed."

Sykes rose and straightened his jacket and gave a quick crisp salute. He turned on his heels and walked out of the room. The hard part was hopefully over, but there was no guarantee of that.

Sykes sat in the warm office waiting for the Lieutenant Colonel as he perspired; well past the range of what he would consider to be comfortable. He looked at the blank walls and noticed the lack of any pictures or anything else that might make it seem normal, except for the picture on his desk. The picture was of a beautiful blonde woman holding a child in her arms, if Sykes had to guess he would say that was the Colonel's wife and child but he couldn't be sure. Sykes looked out the two windows to his left and saw a company going through heavy training obstacle courses, with live fire over their heads. He loved that part of training; it was what honed the soldier into the realities of war. Just as he had begun to be more of a

spectator than a man waiting for his appointment, a man walked into the room. Sykes immediately rose, straightened his uniform and snapped a crisp salute as the man walked behind his desk. He was balding, but his eyes were piercing and analytical. They told stories of what the man had seen, and by what he could read, Sykes knew that this man had seen war on a scale that only a high ranking officer had.

The Colonel returned the salute, as he looked the Lieutenant over. "Have a seat Lieutenant." The Colonel said, as he sat at his desk and pulled the chair up snug to the table. He, then, reached in his right top drawer and removed a tablet. "So I have read your report on Rear Admiral Weatherbee's conduct, and I have to say it's rather opinionated."

"Well that depends, sir."

"On what, exactly, Lieutenant?" The Colonel asked expecting that there wouldn't be a good reason.

"Well, sir, I believe the body count speaks for itself. Twenty- four ODS'T's KIA, and two days later nearly half a company of Marines were KIA." Sykes said calmly, even though every ounce of him wanted to make the Lieutenant Colonel realize the worth of his men.

"Marines die in war, Lieutenant. That is the fact of combat for us officers. None of us like it but it's the way it is. Besides you made many other claims, which you otherwise have failed to show evidence to support."

"Sir, I have evidence." He said as he reached into his pocket and removed the metal disk. He placed it on the desk and slid it over to the Colonel.

"And what is that Lieutenant?"

"Well, sir, that is the proof that I brought with me from _Oasis_. If you wish to look at it, simply interface it with your Holographic Projector."

The Colonel turned with the disk in his hand and placed it in his HP. Immediately the image of Geterix appeared. "Geterix?" The Colonel said, shocked to see the AI.

"Lieutenant Colonel, I haven't seen you since you visited _Oasis_. Wait I'm on Reach? I haven't been here since I was developed. Now how can I help you?" The AI said, as he opened up more than Sykes had seen him do back on _Oasis_.

"Geterix, do you have evidence that would implicate any charges against the ethics and strategic planning of one Rear Admiral Weatherbee?" The Colonel asked, as he focused back on the situation at hand.

"Yes sir. Would you like the details right now?" The AI said in true efficiency fashion.

"No thank you Geterix. Please compile all of it and we will go over it later." The Colonel said as he turned in the chair to face Sykes.

"Well, sir, I believe that Geterix will be able to provide you with all you will need to confirm my claims."

"Yes Lieutenant I agree. And if it weren't for the fact that you needed this trump card I would have had you court marshaled immediately. However, I can see why you took it, insurance. Right?" The Colonel asked, as he raised his right eyebrow.

"Yes sir."

"Well, very well. It will be great help in the case. Now, onto the other matters of which we must discuss; I have gone over your mission report and after speaking with Major General Merrick, we have decided that you will be the Company XO."

"Thank you, sir. I'm honored."

"However, there is a problem. A Second Lieutenant isn't normally the company XO unless the original XO was KIA. That being said, I'm here by promoting you to First Lieutenant as acting CO of the 45th Battalions Company K. Congratulation's Lieutenant." The Colonel said as he handed him a Sweet William Cigar.

"Thank you, sir, but if I may ask; who will be our Company CO?" The Lieutenant asked, as he placed the cigar in his mouth and searched for his lighter in his uniform pockets.

The Colonel leaned over his desk and lit the cigar with an antique Zippo lighter. Then he grabbed one for himself and lit it. As he took a big drag off the cigar he answered the Lieutenant's question. "His name is Captain Jeffery Wallace, and I can tell you from experience, he is one tough son of a bitch."

"So, can I expect him at the barracks when I get there sir?" Sykes said as he let the smoke pour out of his mouth.

"Nope, he won't be here for three months. He has been busy at work fighting the Covenant and hasn't even gotten the word yet. Until he gets here, you are acting commander of Knight Company. As your first official act to your company, I am giving you authorization to do two things." The Colonel said with a smirk on his face as he took another drag off the cigar.

"And what would that be sir?"

"First promote a new 1st Sergeant, and fill in all the NCO positions with active members of your company. Second, order three weeks R&R."

"Well Sir I think I may just do that." The Lieutenant said as he stood and saluted. "Thank you Sir."

"Who will you visit?" The Colonel asked.

"I don't know sir." The Lieutenant responded generally unsure of how he should react to such a question from his superior.

"Might I make a suggestion there as well?"

"Of course Sir."

"Well a certain Chief Petty Officer has been asking around about you. And your record says he is your uncle."

"Yes sir."

"He is on Reach right now." The Colonel said as he took another deep drag of his cigar.

"Uncle Frank is on Reach?"

"Yes he is, although I do have to say it is rather strange, a Marine, with family who is die-hard Navy."

"Yes sir. He hackles me about it every time he sees me. But my father was a Marine, my mother a Navy Medic. I had to choose one and my bedside manner sucks so I was stuck with the Marines." Sykes said as he smiled thinking about the old days when his family was all still alive on Harvest. He took a deep drag of his Sweet William.

"Well it seems you chose the right one Lieutenant. Well, if you don't mind I do have a lot of paperwork to file now."

"Of course, sir." Sykes saluted again and turned on his heels and walked out of the room. He had walked in a Second Lieutenant and left a First Lieutenant and the Knight Company CO. And he thought the Second Lieutenant Bar was heavy, he definitely wasn't ready for the First's weight.

Lieutenant Sykes pulled up, in his new personal Warthog, right outside the Knight Company Barracks. He sported his new silver bar on both shoulders and walked into the building still puffing on his cigar. He saw his men spread out through the building and Billings standing with Cools keeping an eye on the men who had just survived hell itself, as soon as they saw the Lieutenant, Billings quickly snapped to and Cools right after. "Aten Hut" Billings shouted as the room went from a loud strung-out compellation of people to a quiet unified company that stood at full attention.

Sykes quickly saluted and removed the smoldering cigar from his lips as he looked upon the handful of men, who were now all that remained of the once strong and proud company. "At ease Knight Company. And welcome home."

"Thank you Sir." The company responded in unison.

"As you were men." Sykes said as the company slowly loosened up and began to sit down and return to their conversations that had made them forget, for the moment, that they had just been through a dangerous and traumatic event that very few people could really understand. Sykes walked up to Billings and Cools as they noticed the different color on his shoulders, and gave one another approving looks as they looked back at the now First Lieutenant.

"Congratulation's sir. You deserve it." Billings said as he pointed at the bars.

"Thank you Sergeant. Now, will you please meet with me in my office?"

Sykes said as he took another drag off of his cigar.

"Yes sir." He said as Sykes looked at Cools.

"Cools, round up Singer, Belinger, and three more of our best corporal's, and have them waiting outside my office." Sykes said as he began to walk with Billings down the hallway.

"Yes sir."

"Oh and Cools, I'll want to see you in my office after I'm done with the Master Sergeant."

"Yes sir." Cools said as he snapped a crisp salute and went to his duties. The Lieutenant and Master Sergeant proceeded down the hallway.

The two men walked into the dusty office, which had still not been cleaned out of Sykes' predecessor's personal items. However, Sykes walked around the modest desk and sat in the chair with an uncomfortable ease. He looked at the young NCO, who had been promoted to his position so quickly due to his heroism and successes on the battlefield. "So we have been given the orders to begin rebuilding the company, and we can expect new recruits straight out of boot in one month."

"Good sir, I would hate to see the company separated due to our dwindling numbers." Billings said, as he still stood at attention.

"And that brings us to you Sergeant. As you know, when building a company or any army it's essential to have an established, and effective, chain of command. Well, ever since I was promoted there has been a hole in the ranks, and a hole that needs to be filled. Lucky for us I have been given permission to promote any NCOs or regular Marines as I see fit, 'til our Commander arrives. That being said, I believe that you are the most qualified man to be the new Company First Sergeant and that being said I am promoting you to the rank of Sergeant Major."

"Thank you Sir." The Sergeant said as he snapped a crisp salute.

"Our acting Battalion commander has also given me the order to promote those that I see fit to fill the NCO positions that we currently have open. Do you have any suggestions?" Sykes asked as he tapped his cigar on the edge of an ashtray sitting on his desk.

"Oh I can think of a few, sir. But what are your thoughts on our current NCOs."

"Well with Cools and Rhodes I believe that I should promote them up two levels. Not only because the spots need filled, but also because they have proved themselves. When it comes to the Sergeants, almost all of them proved that they are reliable and should be promoted."

"Almost all, Sir?" The Sergeant Major asked as he raised an eyebrow.

"Needless to say I was less than impressed with Ferris during the last mission; In fact I'm seriously considering transferring him."

"Yes, Sir. I doubt many in the company would disagree with that decision."

"You say that like you know something I don't. What is it?"

"Well sir I just encountered some of his insubordination during the Hi-point of the mission. And I have to agree with the assessment, his actions bordered on mutiny."

"Why didn't you say something?"

"Well sir, we were all under a great deal of strain, myself included. I wanted to believe that he was just scared. However, his actions since then haven't changed very much showing me that he isn't fit for duty."

"Well, I will begin the paperwork soon. Now, let's talk about something else that is very important."

"What's that Sir?"

"Well it's going to be three months, at least, 'til our new CO arrives on planet, and I have been given permission to grant the company furlough. I have decided that since we will not be getting our new recruits 'til next month, three weeks would be plenty R&R for the company."

"Yes sir and might I suggest that before announcing this, we make sure that the men are all stable enough to be released into the population?"

"Agreed. I want you to check them out while I speak with the Corporals, and as for Ferris. Well, I will have him gone by the time the day is out. Before you send in the Corporals, have Cools and Rhodes come in here."

"Yes Sir." Billings said as he saluted and walked out of the room.

Sykes took a long drag of his diminishing cigar, and exhaled as he looked around the room. He quickly snuffed out the remains of the reward when there was a quick three knocks at the door. "Come." Sykes said immediately as the door opened and Sergeant Ferris stood in front of him. "Can I help you Sergeant?" Sykes asked with the look of annoyance in his eyes that was used to cover up the surprise.

"Yes Sir." Ferris said as he looked at his commander with a stupid stare that made Sykes want to slap him. "I would like to request a transfer."

"For what reason?"

"I'm not sure if the military is right for me."

"Well if that's what you want Sergeant."

"Yeah I didn't think I'd get any resistance from you." The Sergeant said as he turned to leave.

"Halt." The Lieutenant said as he rose from his chair. "First of all, you have not been dismissed, and second you are acting like an arrogant ass and that's not a wise thing to do when dealing with your superior."

"Yes Sir, would you like me to be your bitch to, sir? Would that get me some brownie points?"

Sykes raced around his desk and got so close to Ferris that the two were nearly touching noses. His eyes were red both from the long day he had had, and also from the anger that now flowed through his veins. "Sergeant if you don't tread very carefully I will have you Court Marshaled for insubordination and disrespecting your superior."

"Pardon me if I'm not frightened by your hollow threats sir." Ferris growled back trying to force the Lieutenant to give up his attack.

Sykes quickly delivered a right jab to the Sergeant's face which flung the man backwards through the doorway. Rhodes and Cools were walking up at just that moment and stopped in their tracks at the sight of the young Sergeant falling end over end into the hall way. Sykes quickly tapped his earpiece. "Cools, Rhodes secure the Sergeant. Yes, MP's please. Hello, I need a pick up for one Sergeant Ferris at Knight Company Barracks. Yes, he will be awaiting court marshal." Sykes said, as his heart began to slow. He looked at the man who was being restrained by the two Staff Sergeants, this wasn't how he wanted it to go, but this was how it had too, as unfortunate as it was.

The Lieutenant lit up a fresh cigar as he stepped out of the barracks and proceeded to walk to his Warthog, it had been a long day for the new officer. First, with the debriefing, then the new assignment, promotions, and Sergeant Ferris's court marshal. Somehow in one day he had managed to encompass almost all the experiences that an officer will come across in his professional life. He was nursing his well bruised fist, when he noticed movement out of the corner of his eye. Forgetting the pain, he grabbed his sidearm and turned to point it at the person who was sneaking up on him.

"I don't think you need that sir." The voice of newly promoted Sergeant Singer said as the Lieutenant pointed his M-6 at her. Once he realized who it was he quickly lowered the weapon in amazement.

"Is there something I can do for you Sergeant?" Sykes said as he holstered his weapon.

She was in her fatigues still, as she carried her duffle bag slung over her right shoulder. She was a beautiful girl with a uniqueness that no one could match and no one could describe. Her hair was long shimmering black and it was tightly secured in a ponytail behind her military cap. Her eyes were always a strange darkness that not even Sykes could look into for a long period of time. She was an anomaly with her beauty. She definitely didn't have to fight, but she did and she did exceptionally. "Sir, I just wanted to thank you for the

promotion."

"Well Sergeant you deserve it, especially after how well you did against the covenant back on Oasis." He said as he lowered his cigar and exhaled the remains of what had been a leisurely drag. The smoke danced upwards, through the dimming air as the two Marines stood there looking more than talking.

"Thank you Sir."

"So, how do you plan on spending your R&R Sergeant?" The Lieutenant said to change the subject, trying to avoid the uncomfortable silence.

"Hiking, Sir. I leave in two hours." She said accepting the Lieutenants desire to change topics to something that was less formal.

"Two hour's huh? Well, I'm headed over to the E-Club, why don't you come alongâ€¦ I'll buy you a drink." The Lieutenant said, as he placed the cigar back in his mouth and took another long drag.

"I'd like that Sir, but don't you think that you should go to the O-Club?"

"Don't get me wrong, Sergeant, I can go to the O-Club. However, I'm a former enlisted man so it is a bit to intimidating for me." Sykes turned and waved his hand to direct the Sergeant to follow him to his hog. "Besides I'm meeting someone at the bar."

"Girlfriend Sir?"

Sykes immediately stopped in his tracks and began to laugh. However, it wasn't at the Sergeant that he was laughing, it was his defense mechanism. The truth about the Lieutenant was that his love life was somewhat familiar to his professional one; most ended with gunfire and was scarred with emotional combat. After he almost got married once, he swore off the whole entire idea and just accepted that he wasn't that type of guy. After all, he was the guy they sent to kill people. What business did he really have outside of that. "No Sergeant, I'm meeting my uncle." Sykes said as he lowered the back of his transport Warthog, so that the Sergeant could store her duffle.

"Oh I wasn't aware that you had any family in the Corp. Sir."

Sykes chuckled to himself again at the mere thought of his Uncle Frank being a Marine. Even though the two of them were close, given that they were all that was left of their family, the CPO had always given his nephew a hard time for not going Navy like him. "No, Sergeant, he is a Chief Petty Officer in the Navy." Sykes said as the two Marines sat down in the Warthog. The Lieutenant started the engine and peeled-out, as it was his fashion. He wasn't a showoff he just couldn't turn off his wartime habits.

The two pulled up in front of the E-Club as the sun set over the horizon. The old style bar was jumping with old time music that had once been called Metal. Even though music had progressed greatly in the past five hundred years, a lot of Enlisted men still loved the classics and the Lieutenant counted himself among that group. The two

walked into the bar to see a large number of enlisted men sitting all over the place drinking and generally being rowdy. This was acceptable given the strain they had to deal with every day, and Sykes knew he used to be worse than all of them, especially back when he was an ODS. Someone who noticed the Lieutenant immediately shouted, "Officer on deck." The whole bar went quiet as all the men rose and gave crisp salutes, even those who were heavily inebriated.

Sykes immediately returned the salute and spoke loudly enough so that everyone could hear him. "As you were." All the men returned to their drinking as Sykes turned to the bartender. "A shot of whisky and a beer, and whatever she is having." Sykes said as he pointed his thumb at the Sergeant. Sykes immediately felt something was about to happen as he continued to stand there. He knew, from a feeling he had adapted from combat, that he was being stalked. Just as he threw back his shot of whisky it hit him. Faster than the heat of the alcohol could set in, he was in midair falling towards the floor. He quickly grabbed the leg of his attacker and drew it into his arms securing the knee after his collision with the ground. The Lieutenant immediately put the attacker into a three-way leg hold, while his attacker countered by throwing his leg over the Lieutenants' head and choking him out between his legs. The two were locked in stalemate till it was, cruelly, broken up.

"Release the Lieutenant!" Singer said as she pointed her M-6 at the attacker.

"Stand down Sergeant, I was expecting this." The Lieutenant said as he rose and offered his hand to his sparring partner who was much older. The man was a decent height with graying hair and a mustache that was beginning to follow suite with the rest of his hair. "Sergeant this is my Uncle, Chief Petty Officer Frank Mendez."

"So what's this? You become an officer, and all of a sudden you make your NCOs fight your battles for you? Wow your learning fast aren't ya." The Chief said as he brushed off his shirt.

"Sure, Uncle Frank, and I could have sworn I had you ready to tap out." Sykes said as he grabbed his beer and took a swig.

"Oh you did, did you? Because I thought I had you in the same situation." The Chief said as he held up a single finger to the bartender, who immediately produced a beer for him. "I don't know, Will, looks like you're getting soft on me. This old Petty Officer isn't going to have to kick your ass into gear is he?"

The Lieutenant smirked and clinked his bottle against his Uncle's. "Well you could try but I'd hate to ruin the Navy's only good soldier."

The Chief smirked as he took a swig of his beer. "Awful cocky for a jarhead, and who exactly would this young lady be?" The Chief said hinting towards the momentarily forgotten Sergeant, who had just then been holstering her pistol.

"Sorry, Uncle Frank this is my newest NCO Sergeant Adrian Singer." Singer immediately snapped to and gave a crisp salute.

"At ease Sergeant, this is a bar and it's only a battlefield when

we've had too much to drink. Even then salutes aren't needed." The CPO said as he raised his bottle for another swig. Sykes was happy to see his Uncle again, the only one he had left.

End
file.